

Welcome to Creative Bursts: short creative activities to do at home with your children.

Creative Bursts are created by Sarah Webb and supported by MoLI – Museum of Literature Ireland.

Sarah Webb is an award-winning children's writer and children's book champion. Her children's books include *A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea*, illustrated by Steve McCarthy which won the Irish Book Awards Junior Category and *Blazing a Trail: Irish Women Who Changed the World*, illustrated by Lauren O'Neill which won the Irish Book Awards Senior Category. Her latest book is *Dare to Dream: Irish People Who Took On the World (and Won!)*, illustrated by Graham Corcoran.

MoLI is committed to youth creativity and alongside the free primary schools tour and workshops programme, we also run Bright Sparks – a series of art and story workshops facilitated by Irish writers and illustrators where families embrace the opportunity to play and create together.

To get lost in a Creative Burst all you need is a pencil or pen and a notebook or piece of paper.

The writing games and prompts are aimed at around age 9+ but could be done with younger children if you give them a bit of help. Also included are more challenging story prompts for older or more experienced writers of around 11+ (every young writer is different).

Remember grown-ups – please join in too! It's great for children to see you being creative, making mistakes and having fun on the page!

Today's theme is: What a World!

We will be looking at the wonderful world of nature.

Warm Up

To get started let's warm up those writing muscles.

You could start by writing this quote into your writing notebook, copybook or sheet of paper. You could give it a fancy frame or border if you like!

“And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.

Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.” - Roald Dahl

If you've already got that one in your notebook, how about one of these:

"In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they're still beautiful." - Alice Walker

Alice Walker is a famous American writer who wrote *The Colour Purple*.
"If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere." - Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura Ingalls Wilder was born in 1867 and wrote the *Little House on the Prairie* books.

Creative Bursts Challenge #1: Walking in the Forest!

I love walking with my dog, Lucky on Dún Laoghaire pier. We love being by the water and are often joined by sea birds. Sometimes a seal pops up to say hello.

I'm fascinated by jellyfish. Did you know the Irish for jellyfish is smugairle róin or seal snot? Strange but true!

We also love walking in the forest. He loves sniffing out all kinds of smells in the damp leaves and tree stumps.

Our first story prompt is inspired by walking in the forest with Lucky. You are out walking in the forest (with your dog if you like) when you spot a large opening in a tree trunk.

You go closer – there's something moving in there.

You look inside and see...

(If you're with your dog she/he probably smells or hears it first – they have very sensitive noses and ears!)

It can be a real creature, something imaginary like a unicorn or a dragon – or the hole can be a portal to another world – you decide!

Creative Bursts Challenge #2: Beautiful Rain!

We live in a very green country – and it's so full of lush green grass because it rains quite a bit.

In my collection of poems and rhymes, *A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea* (illustrated by Steve McCarthy) there is a well known rain rhyme:

It's raining, it's pouring,
The old man is snoring,
He went to bed and bumped his head
And couldn't get up in the morning.

There are lots of different words in Ireland for types of rain. Write down as many of them as you can think of.

Onomatopoeia: Big fancy word with a simple meaning. It's a word that sounds like the noise it makes. One of my favourites is the word patter. And I also love buzz.

Can you think of any words that sound like rain:

How about:
Splash
Plop
Pitter patter

There was a famous Japanese poet called Matsuo Basho, born in 1644 and he wrote a haiku about a frog jumping into water called *The Old Pond*.

We'll talk about haikus in a moment.

This is my favourite translation of his frog poem which has a great onomatopoeic word in it – kerplunk!

Ancient silent pond
Then a frog jumped right in
Watersound: kerplunk
Translation by John S. Major

Now write a story or draw a picture about the day it started raining and didn't stop. But the rain wasn't water, it was...

You decide!

Creative Bursts Challenge #3: Cherry Blossom

A haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. It doesn't rhyme and has a special pattern:

Line 1: five syllables

Line 2: seven syllables

Line 3: five syllables

A syllable means a vowel sound – so my name, Sarah – has two syllables:
Sa-rah.

Here is a haiku I like:

The summer river
although there is a bridge, my horse
goes through the water.
By, Masaoka Shiki

Sometimes writers create what I call 'tiny poems' which are short, like haikus, but don't follow the pattern of a haiku.

Here are some examples:

An umbrella
And a raincoat
Are walking and talking together.
By *Buson*

I could eat it!
This snow that falls
So softly, so softly.
By *Issa*

Here's an example of a haiku I wrote about cherry blossom:

'Cherry Blossom' by Sarah Webb

Oceans of pink froth
As far as the eye can see,
Nature's candyfloss.

Here's a tiny poem I wrote about trees – it's very simple:

Trees, trees,
In the breeze,
Wind dancing
In the green leaves.

Now write a tiny poem or a haiku about:

Cherry blossom
Trees
Daffodils
Rain

Creative Bursts Challenge #4: Using Your Senses Outside

Do you have a garden or a green or park near you? It's time to grab your grown up and go outside!

Make sure there are not too many people in the public space you are standing or sitting in of course. We all need to keep a safe distance at the moment. Now close your eyes and take in the sounds. Do you hear birds tweeting?

Traffic? Be still in the moment and try to take it all in.

Now finish the following sentences:

I see...
I hear...
I touch...

(This might be spiky grass under your fingers, the rough bark of a tree)

I smell...

(Take a good sniff and see if you can smell anything – maybe the scent of the grass. Are there flowers in the park or your garden? You can smell them – but be careful not to touch them as it might damage them.)

We will leave out taste for this one!

Now take your answers and make a poem out of your observations – the things you have seen, heard and smelt.

You can call it:

Outside

Outside in my garden (or in the park etc)

I see... (add your own sentences to each of these)

I hear...

I touch...

I smell...

What a world!

-

I hope you enjoyed today's Creative Bursts!

And remember what Einstein said: 'Creativity is intelligence having fun.'

Keep writing,

Sarah

Text copyright Sarah Webb, 2020